

Serious and Comfortable Advice,
TO THE GOOD PEOPLE OF ENGLAND,
OF ALL DENOMINATIONS—

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WHO WISH TO BE FREE, AND ENJOY LIBERTY ACCORD-
ING TO REASON AND UNDERSTANDING BOTH IN
RELIGION, AND POLITICKS—IMPORTUNING NEITHER
POVERTY, NOR RICHES; NEITHER EQUALITY, NOR
DESPOTISM: WHEN TO WHAT PURPOSE, IS MISERY
TO BE BROUGHT UPON THE PRESENT GENERATION?

DELIVERED RECENTLY TO HIS FLOCK, IN HIS TWO COUNTRY
CHURCHES UNDER OUR HAPPY ESTABLISHMENT,

By C. Dickens, L.L.D.

Sermons fetch no applause from Men's Renown:
The People's practice is, the Preacher's Crown.

St. I V E S,

Printed by P. C. CROFT—and may be had of him, or of the Deliverer
at Hemingford Abbots, *Huntingdonshire*.

(PRICE ONE SHILLING.)

This Publication is deemed a fit and proper Sequel to two Sermons, lately
preached by C. D. L. L. D.

19

Series and Consistent Advice

TO THE GOOD PEOPLE OF THE LAND

OF ALL DOMINIONS

WHO ARE TO BE HONORED
AND TO BE HONORED
RELIGION AND HONOR
POVERTY, AND HONOR
DEPORTMENT: AND TO BE HONORED
TO BE HONORED

THEIR OWN HONOR
AND HONOR

THEIR OWN HONOR



Series for the people
The people's series

(Series for the people)

The people's series
The people's series

S E R I O U S

And Comfortable Advice,

(In three P A R T S,)

Leviticus 19th. Chap. & 17th. Verse;

*“Thou shalt not hate thy Brother, in thine Heart; Thou
“shalt in any wise, rebuke-thy Neighbour; and not suffer
“sin, upon Him.”*

First P A R T.

MAN, that is born of a Woman, according to holy Job—who died himself, being old and full of Days—had (we are told,) his Denomination, from Society; and verily, whoever thinks that, he was born only for himself—forgets that, he was born a Man; and has little more left him than, his bare Human figure, to distinguish him from a wild, and solitary *Beast*:—

Am I, my Brother's keeper—was therefore both a surly, and inhuman reply; fit only for the mouth of Him, who was doomed to be a Fugitive, and a Vagabond in the Earth: but lest, such a mischievous and selfish principle should universally prevail—the wise and merciful providence of God, has so ordered it—that our continual dependance upon each other, should be the bond of mutual commerce and affection; so that, no man

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having

having the means of happiness entirely in himself, every one is forced to borrow from other hands, wherewith to sustain, or sweeten Life, to make his condition at all, comfortable:—

Hence, a serious concern for the benefit of our Neighbour, is deeply intermixed with our own; and has so insinuated itself into our very nature, that a due observance of this virtue, has appropriated to itself, the very just name of Humanity.

Thus, to relieve the Indigent—to visit the Sick—to vindicate the Injured—and comfort the Disconsolate—are actions which, the worst of mankind, will acknowledge praise-worthy; and to which, every man who, has not wholly debauched and stupified his reason, finds in himself, a strong propensity:—

Only where, the soul of our Brother, is the object—and spiritual Counsel, the alms to be imparted—there usually, we are too many of us, very backward—and very hardly sometimes, to be persuaded that, it is indeed, our duty as Men—but more particularly as Christians:—

Hence we may, and do find many—who hold themselves obliged to part with Bread for the preservation of their neighbour's Body—who yet would be excused the charity of setting the Soul one step forward, in it's safe way to Heaven; especially where friendly reproof, is requisite; and our neighbour's faults to be ripped up, in order to amend Him:—here, even good and pious persons, discover a very strange aversion—tremble at the
office,

office, as too severe and difficult—shuffling aside the unwelcome obligation, upon almost any terms:—

But how ready soever, some may be, to excuse themselves and others, in this point — (Men that, are unwilling to reprove—and more so, to be reproved—) yet with God, it is indispenſible—who has bound it upon us all, in as strict a charge as, any other precept whatsoever.

My design then, being if possible—to retrieve the credit, and recover the practice of this shamefully neglected duty—(the disuse whereof, has given so much encouragement to all prophaness, immorality, and debauchery—and caused so sensible a decay of piety, and virtue—)

I shall in the plainest manner, and with all the seriousness I can—first examine the pretences, whereupon Men generally excuse themselves from it—

Secondly, shall urge some arguments to persuade them, to it—

And, lastly—shall propose such cautions and directions, as may be helpful towards the successful discharge of it.

But first—to begin with the pretences that, are usually alledged to excuse Men, from the practice of it.

Man, (we are told in our Bible—) was no sooner fallen, than he began to be, a querulous creature—more apt to complain, than to obey; and would God dispense with his commands, as often as Man could frame excuses—there would be no such thing as duty, in the World:

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for as that wisdom, which created —so that goodness, which redeemed the World, has been arraigned, and censured too often. at the bar of Human judgment!

Not a ceremony of *the Law*, not a command in the *Decalogue*, not a doctrine in the *Gospel*—but has been traversed by open opposition, or admitted with murmuring and great reluctance—(as particularly in the very case, *before us*—) though the salvation, of a soul, must be thought worthy every man's care and endeavour, who sincerely believes, it's immortality: yet when reproof is the part expected from us, towards it—how very ready are we to excuse ourselves, by pretending first—that this is, an unpleasant office—enough to frighten Men from society if, they must undergo the continual mortification, of having their faults and follies censured: To harp upon this harsh string, must needs be grating to the ear, and spoil the harmony of our best conversation; 'tis galling our friend, in his tenderest part; 'tis to set up for a Dictator—and make our tongue, a scourge to our company; —when the end must be, every Man, will be shy of our visits, weary of our discourse—and in return, inquisitive to find out, and publish our faults and miscarriages, to the World; when, the only thanks we are likely to get, is—to go away with the characters of busy fellows, and impertinent, meddling busy bodies:—

This it was, (saith holy writ—) made the Prophet Elijah, pass for a troubler of Israel; and Micajah, a hateful person, to King Ahab; so St. Paul, was reputed
a mad-man,

a mad-man, for the liberty he took before Festus, (the Roman Governor—)

I answer however, that though all God's ways, are ways of pleasantness—and there are motives enough in piety, to convince the reason, and engage the affections of any serious and well disposed persons; yet it is all mystery and paradox to him, that never made the experiment; and therefore he, that will perform no duty, till corrupt nature shall pronounce it pleasant and agreeable, is never likely to do any thing at all, in the ways of God, and religion.

But if ye (my Friends,) are Christians—for shame, prefer not your ease, before your duty to God, to your Neighbours, or yourselves; neither value any Brother's respect, above his Soul:—look not to the consequence, but to the performance of the divine command;—and grudge not to serve God of that, which costs you something:—suppose moreover herein, the very worst—that, ye should be frowned upon, and slighted—shunned, and hated—that, your reputation should suffer through the resentment of barbarous and unthankful spirits, for reproving faithfully, as ye ought:—remember yet, that a truly good man, will ever prosecute his duty, through evil report, and good report; so do ye!

And know ye all this; that it is creditable to lose our own good name, in God's cause; that, it is happy for that man against whom the World hath nothing more to al-

ledge, than the being too nicely solicitous of his Brother's, or his Neighbour's salvation!

The peace of conscience void of offence, and the acquittance and satisfaction of our own minds will verily, make us all abundant recompense, in this World;—and God too, who judges not as mortals here, will yet more amply reward us, hereafter;—when he, that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins:—be ye not then (my Friends,) overmuch concerned at the grief and disturbance ye may occasion any, from your reproofs—provided, they prove effectual; for sorrow surely, is the necessary consequence of sin; and better sure it is that, by a timely repentance, it should end in joy—than in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!

It is objected yet, (we hear,) that this is a dangerous office which, may sooner enrage the party than, amend him;—to draw upon one's self probably, the fury, as well as hatred of, an obstinate sinner who, will be sure to think himself affronted, by reproof;—and instead of thanking us, for the charity of it—will turn again most likely, and rent us! The Baptist (we read,) lost his head, for reproving King Herod; and it was usual for the rebellious house of Israel, to stone the Prophets that, were sent to them, upon such errands.

There are instances (God knows, too many—) of such as would fain be unaccountable in their wickedness

ness—and because they hate to be reformed, affect to be above the reach of notice and rebuke :

When as for such bold sinners, whose consciences are seared it may be, to all advice and argument—it is not (I think,) either safe, or prudent to apply to them, after this manner; or by any means, without an immediate commission from Heaven—which would be wasting the precious ointment, and spilling water on the ground, without any hopes of blessing or success—when yet, for our own justification, we have the Wise Man Solomon's counsel, not to reprove a scorner, lest he hate thee:—whilst such an one may, and ought verily, to be recommended in our prayers to the Throne of Grace, for all mankind—(as well our enemies, as friends; for Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics—as well as Christians—) because with God, all things are possible :—as also, that they may be brought to the due correction of our Laws—where the offence is such, as is cognizable by the civil Magistrate: However, should our reproof be thrown away upon such an one—and if he be irreclaimable also, by the Laws—we should leave him (I trust,) as the physician does his desperate patient, upon whom all remedies, prove successless; remembering only, that he be a scorner with whom, ye deal thus: for it is not sufficient that, he hath walked in the counsel of the ungodly, or hath stood in the way of sinners—(who are very proper objects for our seasonable reproof;—) whilst, if he has sat down in the seat of the scornful—he surely,
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is then lost to all good advice, not within the power of gentle, or any ordinary means of our's; when nothing probably, will awaken him but, either the just severity of the magistrate in this World, through condign punishment—or everlasting burnings, in the next.

When, as to that part of the objection which respects ourselves—we ought to be very cautious of making false alarms of danger and difficulty, only to excuse ourselves the trouble at any time, of discharging our own duty as men—and more so, as Christians;—but we read that, the sluggards pretence, or excuse is—there is a Lion in the way, that affrights him; and where the unworthy fear of man, prevails—we mostly, are very seldom at a loss to raise some imaginary phantom to fright us, from proceeding:—but when the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords bids us go, it is no danger should hinder, to keep us back; neither should any of us, be afraid of doing good, when others (and so very many,) are not afraid of doing evil:—wherefore let us (my Friends,) all learn courage, even from the very sinner himself! for if he fears not God, what reason have we to stand in fear, of Him? go therefore every one of you, (my people,) with as much courage, occasionally to rebuke, as any of your brethren may have done, to offend; nor be less fearful in your reproofs, than they have been courageous, in their sometimes, greatest abominations!—whilst, if the pretence of dangers, will not satisfy—it may further be pretended, (and, I know is—) that the Reprover's, is a
needless

needless office; and why should any of us, interpolate—since the offender may not want reason, more than ourselves;—when, if he do amiss,—to his own Master, he must stand, or fall—without being accountable to us, for what sins, he may have committed; for we are all, miserable sinners; and have enough to do, to mind ourselves,—without too curiously inspecting into the ways and actions, of other people:—now this, is just Cain's language—am I, my Brother's keeper? and yet it is the best plea that, many a man has to offer in excuse for not reproving his sinful Friend, or Neighbour:—

What! is he not as understanding a man, as myself? do ye think, he is not sensible of what he does? but would to God, the ground of such pretence were true; that it were really, a needless office to admonish and reprove some of our Neighbours, even of this Household of Faith:—when alas, the daily Enormities of the prophane and vicious—and the frequent miscarriages even of the good, and well disposed—too commonly demonstrate this necessity before our very eyes, beyond all contradiction:—so that, if we see a Friend or Neighbour, posting on to Hell—should not we stop him? should not we offer him some advice, some one serious counsel, some one seasonable reproof to convert him, or bring him back again? for not to tell a man, (or woman either,) of their faults—because they may have reason and conscience, to tell themselves, of them—is just as if one should refuse to help up a man that, was fallen,—because he had legs to keep him, from the ground: so he, that forbears his re-

proof upon no better account, but only because it would be a reflection upon the person's discretion and conduct—is as unreasonable and uncharitable as he that, will not tell a blind man, he is out of his way—for fear of being thought to take notice of the loss, of his sight:—

The greatest discouragement however, of all is—that it is an unsuccessful, and hopeless office; and the very many disappointments of others that, have gone before us, in this duty—tend very much to obviate and abate whatever may, or can be said to encourage us, to follow them:—for Noah, by all his convincing discourses and wholesome Reproofs, could not persuade eight persons, to provide against the approaching deluge: when, what return too, had just Lot, for his rebukes of wicked Sodom—but their contempt and mockery, to vex his righteous soul? Moses indeed, could upbraid and threaten—but could not incline or soften King Pharaoh; miracles of reproof and conviction, ten times successively repeated, shook his hard heart—but could not, break it; amused and frightened him—but could not draw him, to obedience;—nay, Wisdom herself complaineth of some, that set at nought her counsel, and would none of her Reproof: who then (my Friends,) is sufficient for these things?

It must be owned, (ye all know, as well as I can tell you—) that it is a great discouragement, and enough to break the resolution of many an attempt when, we find all our entreaties and all our labours vain, and our very best intended kindnesses, ill accepted:—

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The holy spirit itself ('tis recorded,) is grieved when it's sanctifying motions are quenched, and it's Heavenly offers rejected; but however, it is our part, carefully to use the means, which God has appointed—and leave to the Almighty, it's issue and success.—though Paul planted, and Apollos watered—the encrease, was still from God!

But the comfort of our duty, does not so much arise from the success which follows it, as from the faithful discharge and performance of it:—It is true, to see a secure soul awakened by our advice, and reformed by our Reproof; to see every message crowned with a blessing, and all our pious designs effectual—must be allowed an occasion of joy—and an inviting argument to proceed: whilst our chief comfort and highest encouragement is not dependent upon a matter so uncertain; for whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear—whether they embrace, or despise our Reproof—whether our counsel leaves them relenting or deriding, it is enough to support us; that we have performed our duty—and thereby, delivered our own souls:—

What then, if our seed fall upon stony ground—must our harvest, be entirely lost? are we not entitled to a reward in Heaven, for the sincerity of our endeavours? what, if they be retorted upon us in malicious slanders, and our desire to reform an offender, pass only for a mask, to conceal our own hypocrisy? what, if it makes no impression—and the sinner turn a deaf ear to the most persuasive representations? yet, since God allows him,
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the opportunity of means—why should not we make the tender of them? why should we give him up for lost, before his time, by withdrawing our good advice and counsel—when, Heaven has not pronounced him irreclaimable? but God be praised, as very bad as the World is—it is not yet sunk so very low, (we trust,) as this objection most cruelly, supposes it; at least not, (let us hope,) in the present Reign, under our gracious King!

For modesty, though possibly, in a declining state here in England,—has yet more influence upon mankind among us, than across the water—where the King is imprisoned, and the mob, triumphant;—there being here (we hope,) few or none, of that perfect accomplishment in vice and wickedness, as to shew no remorse whilst under the discipline of any ordained Minister, or prudent Church Reprover:—whilst, if by our gentle admonitions, we can but prevent any sinner's next appointment of debauchery—if we can but gain a blush, a confession, a promise of amendment that, he that stole, will steal no more—we should never despair of good success—but expect the kind influence of Heaven on our side to remain with us, and concur with our pious endeavours to reclaim the disobedient, and refractory of all our Friends and Neighbours, to fear God—and keep his commandments; remembering that, it is the Lord's cause, we are engaged in—who most strictly, as this Text of Scripture, plainly points out to us—and in any wise, commandeth us, (whatever comes of it—) to rebuke our Neighbours, and not suffer sin, upon them!

Second

Second P A R T.

I COME now *secondly*, in addition to a former discourse on these very words, (*a thus saith the Lord—*) to ask who, is he among you—that will dispute the authority of the Almighty? It being enough surely that, God hath spoken:—so that were there no other reason for this duty, than the command of God—it were verily, sufficient to persuade a Christian; and *this*, we have very frequently pressing us, to a serious regard and performance thereof:—Thou shalt in any wise, rebuke thy Neighbour saith Moses; and if thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, saith our blessed Saviour: And the same, ye may find urged in many other places, of *both Testaments*.

The chief message of the Prophets was,—to tell Judah, of their sins; and Israel, of their Transgressions; and that the Apostles were sent upon the very same errand, we may all learn from hence—that, the Scriptures are expressly said to be profitable for *Reproof*; and the preachers and dispensers of the word, are commanded to rebuke, to exhort, and the like! let not men, then expect to hear peace, peace, from us—while they are in open war and disagreement with Heaven—(publishing the Rights of Man, without calling upon God—) let them,

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(I say—)

(I say—) expect from us, no such complaisance as to connive, or wink at their provoking sins—to soothe, and flatter them into misery, and destruction! for if we, the instructors especially, and pastors of the Church—warn not the wicked to turn from his way—the wicked indeed, shall die in his iniquity; but his blood, will God require at, our Hands!—

God forbid then, that we should so sin in ceasing occasionally, to Reprove you of this, our established household of the true faith in God, the Father—God, the Son—and in God, the Holy Ghost!

And, if ever verily, Reproof was becoming, and seasonable in the Pulpit—if ever it was needful to entertain you (my Hearers,) with this subject—certainly, the encroaching prophaness of very bold and most insolent sinners, (even among ourselves,) the infectious corruption of evil communication, the decaying and almost expiring cause of piety and religion, in our days—will, most surely recommend it in a more especial manner to, our consideration and practice!

But God knows, how short and insufficient our endeavours of this kind (if we alone, are to be concerned in it—) must be to reclaim and amend, so bad a World! we indeed, are not (and a comfort to us it is, that we are not—) eye-witnesses of all the daring provocations and monstrous enormities daily committed from, Pole to Pole: so that we, can only give general prescriptions—except here and there, a particular application to some offenders

offenders, of our own Flock.—Know however further (my People—) that the divine goodness, hath not only made it a part of the pastoral office,—but the duty of every private Christian, to Reprove occasionally, his offending Brother, or Neighbour—

When a careful practice of this duty surely, must be a most considerable check to the growth of so much sin and wickedness, in all quarters!

While the sinner posts on freely in a full career, without the least curb, or restraint—he grows secure; and security, makes him shameless: hence, the seeds of wickedness and vice, take deep root—prophaness throws off all fear and disguise, to ride triumphant (like deceit and guile—) in all our streets:—

Thus, our cowardly—and does not your cowardly silence, pass for Licence and Approbation? our, and your neutrality it is, giveth too often countenance to, excess and debauchery;—when, by our faint-hearted connivance, we multiply that, which in it's own nature, is exceeding fruitful!

It was a black stain upon old Eli's character, not to be purged with sacrifice, and offering for ever—that his Sons, made themselves vile—and he, restrained them not.

Magistrates, (I have above noticed—) are to Reprove, by a faithful execution of the laws; but if they let their authority slumber, which ought always to be active in discouraging and punishing vice—they do in effect establish, and promote it;

So by the very same rule,—that Christian, whoever he be, that wilfully lets slip any fair opportunity of reproving sin, and bringing the offender to repentance and amendment—does (as much as in him lies—) make him, a Licentiate in wickedness, by giving him the liberty and encouragement both to practice, and propagate his sin, all around;—since permission alone, is enough to set all sinners, on work; prophaneness needs no Law, to support it; a bare toleration, will do the business:—

When therefore sin, is of so easy, so quick a growth—does it not require the greatest watchfulness, and industry to keep it down? can he (think ye—) be said to hate the weed, who let's it grow without disturbance? can he be supposed an enemy to sin, who does not set himself to oppose it? or rather, is he not really accessary to his Brother's ruin, that will not use his best endeavours, to rescue and preserve him?

It will not avail, to acquit him at the great Tribunal—to say that, he did not force, did not tempt, or so much as desire him, to sin; since it is enough to condemn him that, he did not by seasonable advice and wholesome Reproof, prevent his Neighbour's fall; but stood by, unconcerned, and suffered sin upon him:—when oh! that we could prevail with men, to try this charitable expedient! what a happy effect in suppressing wickedness—and recovering at least, the outward form of virtue, might it have! It may do good, upon the offender himself, when he shall be given to understand how much he acts against
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the best sense of the wisest men, against the justice of the laws that protect him, against his own interest of soul and body—he cannot surely, upon such a representation, forbear some thoughtful concern for his duty, and his safety!

But the advantage is not wholly confined to the person directly concerned; for as public penalties are more for example, and prevention to others—than for pain and punishment to the criminal—so by a prudent reprehension, we strike rather at the disease, than the patient—and take the very best course, not only to make those, that would be so, cautious:—(as Judge Ashurst, hath well observed to the Grand Jury—) so that, though the immediate object of our care, continue obstinate and unreformed—yet may we awaken others, into some discretion! 'tis good sometimes, to smite the scorner—that, (if it amend not him—) at least the simple, may beware:—them that sin, rebuke before All—that they also, may fear or be afraid:—

If then, we have any concern upon us, (as it becomes all Christians to have for the honor of our most holy Religion—and to dethrone the insolent Tyranny of fashionable, and prevailing wickedness—) if we would destroy the growing Kingdom of Satan—and restore virtue and goodness, to their due and authority with mankind—

It is time, surely, (O my people—) to lay aside that pernicious flattery which confirms and encourages men, in their sins! it is high time, to exert ourselves in sincere,

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and honest plain dealing! no longer to deceive the Friend, whom we profess to value, by dissembling and conniving at his faults—(much less colouring them with false glosses, and the names of virtue—) but rebuke and discountenance sin, wherever we see it—disdaining that absurd good manners of being silent, where Heaven has made it our duty, to *Reprove*.

It is an argument too, doubtless of our love to God, as it is apparently an act of zeal for his authority, and honor! whilst he, who by a tame compliance, suffers sin to get head—who can sit still without making any opposition, while the Adversary goes on conquering—ought no longer to pretend he is on the side of God, and Religion—no; he has renounced his allegiance to his Maker, and denied his Saviour, before men; and so has Christ declared—he that, is not with me, is against me:—when indeed, how can that man have the face to say he loves, what God loves—who has not the courage to hate what, God hates? or what sense of piety and Religion can he pretend, who has no concern to suppress what, must necessarily destroy them?

If when my Friend, is slandered and traduced, my passion rises—and a due regard to friendship, forces me into his vindication; does not reason, gratitude, love, and common honor tell me what, I am to do, when I hear the Holy Name of God, blasphemed—his worship derided—his providence, denyed—and his very Being called in question? shall any of us, sit mute, and tongue
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tied among such clamorous sinners—and have nothing to
 say for our Lord, and our God—when the workers of
 iniquity, so boast, of their doings? when lust, and blas-
 phemy, and prophaneness which proceed from an evil heart
 —run over at the mouth—till sinners grow as careful to
 propagate, as they are to practice their impieties!—then
 certainly, if ever, the righteous ought, to speak wisdom
 —and his tongue, to be talking of judgment—to vindi-
 cate his God, and his Religion; and Reprove boldly, the
 rude offender, who dares to insult them openly, or in
 the congregation of all faithful people:—whilst not to
 do this, is to disgrace our profession;—and to be ashamed
 of our Saviour, and of his Words:—and if so, what is it
 to laugh at, encourage, and repeat the prophane, or filthy
 Jests of any bad company, we may have been in? This
 verily, is to be not only a secret enemy to our Lord—
 but a declared and open Agent, for the Devil!

Whilst it is an instance moreover, of the most tender
 regard, we can any of us shew, to the soul of our Neigh-
 bour;—neither when any dangerous, or malignant
 distemper has seized the body—the physician is not so
 much concerned that, his compositions, be palatable—as
 that, they be proper and salutary;—if health and ease
 may be conveyed,—he cares not, though if it be through
 bitter and unfavoury potions; and would gladly hear his
 patient rage and roar—so it were in order to his amend-
 ment, and recovery.

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The poison of the soul (believe me—) is sin—(as the wages of sin, is death—) that alienates it from God, to consign it to misery, and destruction:—if ever then, we would rightly place our pity—an infected soul, is a proper object; if ever we would exercise our kindest charity—it must be in converting a sinner, from the error of his ways—and saving his soul, from death.

This is doubtless, the highest instance of human love that, can be shewn—and cometh nearest to that stupendous love of God, who sent his only begotten Son (as at this Season) into the World to seek, and to save finally, that which, was lost:—so that, this is properly the business of advice and reproof which is, in a remarkable manner, made the necessary consequence of our love, to our Neighbour!—

Thou shalt not, (says my Text—) hate thy Brother, in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise, rebuke thy Neighbour;—as if, whosoever neglected willingly, this duty—could have no true affection for his Brother—but was so far a hater of him—as he was a conniver at his sins,—(whether secret, or more open ones:) and verily, with just reason; for love, is a very watchful passion, in us All—that will be sure to inform the person beloved, of any approaching danger—and remove it too, if possible: and would not love too, (where it is warm,) disarm any desperate Friend, of that weapon wherewith, he would certainly dispatch himself? or could it, unconcernedly see him embracing a serpent, and not tell him, he hugged his own death?

Certainly,

Certainly, to cross and oppose our Brother, while he rashly designs his own ruin, is the very surest proof of Friendship; whilst correction and rebuke, are the very truest tokens of our love: since hereby we shew that, we value our Brother's or Sister's soul, as well as their bodies; and are willing (if we are good men and Christians—) to hazard the loss of their respect, rather than basely suffer them, to be enemies to their own souls!—open rebuke, (says Solomon—) is better than secret love;—which, too often we know—is very apt to sooth and flatter, to be strait, and selfish—to spy no faults or, to correct none!—whilst a generous and Christian Friendship is plain, free, open, and honest; not to be bribed to secrecy and silence, where the case requires openness and information!—and never spares even any chosen bosom lust, for fear it proves injurious and deadly, to our Neighbours!—when such faithful and friendly wounds,—such free, and open hearted Reproofs, argue a well meaning, and disinterested spirit, that aims in earnest only, at his Brother's good—acting upon no other view, than the glory of God—and the deeply longed for salvation to a miserable, and endangered soul!—

Now this, was the practice of the first, and best days of Christianity in the World—when sincere love, had better footing; and the salvation of souls, was a more general concern; when, if private Reproof, could not reclaim the offender—public censure always took place—(as it should with us;—) so, if any offender refused to hear his Brother, it was told to the Church—(to Christ's

Holy, Catholic Church—) and so, he was delivered unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh—that, the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord, Jesus—(our only Saviour, and Redeemer:—) but the notorious sinner, (the hardened, and obstinate one—) was denied the benefit of Christian Communion, (if not Burial—) and avoided as an infectious person that, by this severity,—he might be frightened out of his sin, and driven finally, to repentance;—to fear God, and better observe his statutes! Thus, if Reproof be (as it has been in old time,) the natural effect of brotherly love—yet ah! what an expiring condition is the love of Christians of the present hour, among us! and where shall we go, to find even the remnants of that out-dated, and most unfashionable former practice—or where is the man among ourselves, who makes a careful, and conscientious observance of it? How justly may we, bewail the decay of it? How reckon this, among the symptoms of the approaching general dissolution?

Then says our blessed Saviour, the love of many, shall wax cold!—when because, there are few or no duties, but may be abused by mismanagement, and prove fruitless by misplacing, or overlooking some circumstances, always necessary to be observed in these most serious matters of counsel, advice, and Reproof;—lest I tire myself too much at present, and you also (my people—) I shall defer what I have further to add, to the next opportunity!—

Third

Third P A R T.

I COME again thirdly, (what I very lately promised—) to advise that, our Reproof be always seasonable; for to every thing, there is a season; and none, more to be watched and observed, than for this nice business of ours, or your Reproof of your Brethren, in the Church: Now it is sometimes, (let me first observe—) adviseable to silence a sinner; as it is, sometimes to keep silence, before him: At one time, it may be needful to reprimand an offender; as at another, to hold our tongues as with a bridle—and refrain even from good words, while the ungodly is in our sight.

Thus for instance, ye should not Reprove a drunkard in his cups, nor an enraged person, in the height of his passion;—nor always a fool, in his folly; for this were to cast thy pearl, before swine.

To recommend sobriety to a sot, while his brain is overclouded with Fumes, and his senses drowned in Liquor—is all one, as to extol light and the sun, before a blind man; let him, see first; for then ye may, convince him.

To rebuke and reason with a man in the height of his fury—is to as much purpose as, to argue the tempestu-
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ous winds into good Humour—or the waves, into silence! Let him cool a little; and perhaps, ye may prevail!

In all applications then, of this nature, (my Brethren,) ye are to study the more favourable instants of Address—when they are most likely to be best received:—and thus some observe, or have observed that, God dealt with our first parents, Adam and Eve;—not proceeding to the curse and punishment immediately after their fall, when (it is like,) their passions were all tumultuous, and their grief and shame, had made them desperate; but he stayed till they recovered themselves a little—and treated with them in a fitter, a more convenient season—(in the cool of the day:—) and so ought we to observe the commodious opportunities of all our Reproofs towards our Brethren, or Neighbours of this our household of faith—when the sinner is at leisure for advice—in good temper to be wrought upon—and in a proper place where, our counsel will be least unwelcome, and our design meet with, fewest obstructions from any one:—when every word,—thus fitly spoken, will be like apples of gold, in pictures of silver: But let the occasion always of our Reproof, be some *real fault*; for a stranger come among us, to our assemblies—who observes how warm and rigid we sometimes, may be about the external and remote parts of worship; how sharp in our censures on behalf of ceremonies, and indifferent things—how careful and zealous, to maintain the outworks of Religion, in our established Churches—he will be tempted probably

bably sometimes, to imagine that our concern proportionably advances with the dignity and value of the subject—and that, we are abundantly more watchful to secure the essentials and vitals of it! whilst alas! Here usually, we are more reserved and sparing—(very often to lose ground in righteousness, mercy, and faith—) while some of us, are too exceedingly nice and curious after little matters—(the Tythe of Mint, Annise, and Cummin:—) So, though the very filings of gold, are precious—and nothing is so mean or superfluous about Religion, but ought to have it's due tendance and respect—yet there principally, we are to double our guard, where the loss will be capital: Not so warmly at any time, to interpose in things disputable, as in things necessary; or quarrel with an infirmity in judgment as severely, as with any criminal practice; an error, so very common and mischievous, that St. Paul himself, thought fit to write a whole Chapter to the Romans, directly against it:—

That Reprover then, gives a very shrewd occasion to suspect the honesty and piety of his design—that must first prove the action unlawful, before he can Reprove it, as sinful:—When; if the first step be dispute—his office, is not that of a rebuker—but of a teacher; and a real guilt, must be the foundation—or all the superstructure of his Reproof vanishes, and is in vain, and to no good purpose: Thus however, (we read—) Job's three Friends, foolishly, (instead of comfort and condolence,) loaded him with censorious imputations—and without

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reason or charity, argued the greatness of his sin, by the greatness of his sufferings:—Whilst the worst is,—when we Reprove another, of whatever denomination—as well as one, of this family to which we belong, (and from our infancy, have belonged—) for what is really his duty,—and not rightly understanding the case, run ourselves into the guilt of an offence, while we rashly rebuke what, is not so—as pious Hannah, suffered by the Reproof of old Eli, when he mistook her earnestness in prayer, for the effect of drunkenness;—so should we every one, be most cautious in all our Reproofs of our Brethren, or of any of our Neighbours:—And if we teach others, or would teach others—let us especially, all look to our own selves! if we preach, a man should not steal—let not us, do so; if a man should not commit adultery—neither, should we; if we abhor idols, we should by no means, commit sacrilege:—Neither should any servant of the Lord, strive—but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach,—patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves:—whilst an insulting, and imperious carriage, rough words,—and a stern, severe countenance are the effect, and sometimes the messengers, (or as messengers,) of a challenge—seeming to demand satisfaction, by thus putting the defendant, immediately upon his guard; so that, both parties are exasperated—and instead of one, being amended—two, are often sufferers—and are made worse.

Advice

Advice however, and Reproof either from the *Laity* or *Clergy*, where both surely, are much concerned to do good unto all men,—especially their Brethren, and their Neighbours—are most likely to prove successful, where there is least appearance of anger, and largest symptoms of affection:—Let the righteous, said the Psalmist—thus smite me; and it shall be a kindness: Let him Reprove me—and it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break mine head:—Obstinacy itself, we all know—has often been won by mildness;—and when rougher usage, has proved insignificant,—sometimes a soft tongue, has broken the bone of the offender; though there may be a time when such gentle means, may not always be sufficient—when the case of our Friend, or Neighbour—may require an harder, or more severe dealing with:—

So that, in the last place—though our Reproof should not be violent, or passionate—yet ought it, sometimes to be vehement, and in earnest:—Nay, my sons, it is no good report that I hear—was a ridiculous way of reprov- ing those Sons of Eli, who were become Sons of Belial:—such fire-brands, should have been plucked out of the fire, with a zeal proportioned to their vile enormities; for the event shews that, this too mild and easy treatment, rather encouraged them, in their *abominations*:—

When vice grows rampant, and unruly—when *women* suffer themselves to be bought and sold with cart-ropes, strings, or halters about their necks, for the paltry con- sideration

literation only of *six-pence*;—oh! shameful, horrible, horrible, and most horrible!

Such a crime doubtless, must be a very great and public scandal and offence, to all virtue and Religion; and more so, should it become habitual, to be committed without reserve, defended without shame, and dared to stand it out, against all milder usage:—Is not the severity necessary to make it the more known too, in all public company—that the parties (on both sides—) may be ashamed, if not amended!

When Peter was an offence to the Church, (in former ages—) St. Paul, withstood him to the face; when, he was an offence to our blessed Saviour, he called him Satan: But as St. Paul used great freedom in rebuking—so in some cases, he recommends it to us, as the very properest method:—thus, when the Cretians were grown false, beastly, and luxurious, (as too many among us, it is to be feared, still are—) he thus writes to Titus, their Bishop: Rebuke them sharply, that they, may be found in the faith:—

But I have (my Friends,) hinted before very often during my very long ministry among you, in both these adjoining parishes—how peculiarly concerned in this duty those are, or should be—that are stiled Overseers of the flock of Christ,—to beseech men, to be reconciled—to walk circumspectly, not as fools—but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

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What I intend indeed further at present, before I quite conclude—shall more chiefly respect our common conversation when occasionally in company, or met together—where discreet and sharp Reproof, may happily sometimes, outface the fauciness of impiety (which, like deceit and guile, hardly ever goeth out of our streets—) where, in such our private meetings together, (besides in our Churches—) evil communications may be corrected, and amended—where virtue may be made as influential, as vice is infectious; and whereby prudent advice and correction, a wholesome tongue, may become a Tree of Life, (without regard to any boasted Tree of Liberty:) for ever and for ever:—

Here then,—*Rebuke*, if close and timely, must have a double edge; to stop the profligate in his full career, and bring him to consideration—to convince him that wiser men, entirely disapprove his conduct, and that he acts as much against right reason, as against his true interest; that he affronts all the sober part of mankind, by his behaviour;—so that with Ishmael, he must always expect their hands, to be against him:

Thus, as iron, sharpens iron; so may in private company, the countenance of a prudent man,—his Friend, or Neighbour:—

Have salt in yourselves, said our blessed Saviour, who has also commanded us, to let our light shine before others; giving us hereby to understand, that a christian's deportment is not to terminate in a care only, of his own

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soul—but must have a favourable influence upon All, with whom, he converses:—

He must not, (as too many do —) content himself with the soundness of his own principles, and the regularity of his own practice—but, (as our blessed Lord—) must go about, doing good! when oh! how many favourable opportunities and advantages to a serious, and well disposed christian, would every day afford to be helpful and beneficial to souls, where there are so many ignorant, to instruct upon the face, of the whole earth from Pole, to Pole! so many weak, to support; so many unsettled, to advise—and so many offenders, (besides T. P.) to rebuke!

It is, I confess an unpopular, and unpractised duty which, I have so long, been recommending—though it be really such as the command of God, and the case of our Neighbour, requires of every one, of us: For while the rich man, may think it below him, and the poor man pretends, it is above him—while the ignorant, plead their ignorance in excuse—and the learned among us, study arguments in philosophy, to avoid it; nay! while pious and sober, and well disposed christians can scarce be prevailed upon to regard and practice it—it comes to pass that, the Rebuker can find no place in the earth; and the faithful Reprover, is ceased from among the children of men,

So that, to press this duty—and conclude this third, and last discourse—(my beloved brethren,) if we are
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in earnest concerned to keep down the growth, and weaken the interest of sin, in the World; if we have any regard for souls, (the better part of mankind—) and are desirous to promote and forward their salvation, in Heaven—if we have any true love of God, and sense, or feeling of goodness; these,—all these persuade, command, and bind this saving and profitable duty, upon us christians:—and would to God, we were all so far convinced, as faithfully to make the experiment—and try how proper and useful an expedient for all these glorious purposes—a serious, seasonable, friendly, and persuasive Reproof, is; and what an excellent method we take, to reclaim and amend the World, when we in good-will, earnestly endeavour to rebuke our unfortunate Friends, and Neighbours in it—and not suffer sin, upon them!

I shall now finally conclude with that pertinent, and pressing advice of the Apostle, to the Hebrews—who chargeth us, to exhort one another daily, while it is called to day—lest any of us, be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin—subjoining moreover, this proverb of the Wise Man;—he, that hateth Reproof, shall die!

Fare ye well.

F I N I S.